

Veronika Pausova, Marina Grize &  
Peggy Chiang  
*Hard to Imagine*

Margot Samel presents *Hard to Imagine*, a group exhibition with Peggy Chiang, Marina Grize, and Veronika Pausova.

The phrase *hard to imagine* is an insistence on trust. When something denies psychic imagining, it must be taken at the word of another. It must be accepted that gaps from what is seen to what is known create a distance between a subject and the heart of whatever is difficult to picture. These gaps withhold—some parts remain private. Rather than a conspiratorial act, the artists featured in this exhibition use this suspension of form—through sculpture, painting, and photography—to harbor intimacies, hold the figure, and resist extractive narrativization.

The exhibition is titled after a sculpture by Peggy Chiang where patinated steel, tempered glass, and automotive window tint veil an interior form's arrival. Throughout Chiang's works, familiar objects are reassembled, severed, or shielded to warp what a viewer expects of them. Their functions may be detached from their origin, but use is still implied. It is hard to imagine what may lie behind a darkened glass, as the titular work may suggest, just as much as it may be hard to imagine the use of a hanger holding merely the collar of a soiled shirt. And still, these works present wholeness with only a fragment of their form present.

In similar fashion, Marina Grize's approach to the photograph severs the context in which the figures of her works are enclosed, thereby rendering them free. In the works on view, images are scanned from the lesbian erotic magazine *On Our Backs* and rendered as dye sublimation, silver gelatin prints, or reversal prints encased by poured aluminum frames. The figures that once appeared across the pages of the magazine from 1984–89, are cropped, distorted, and withheld—present and distant at once, enrapt in their absent activities. Rather than a portrait, a kind of free-associative fiction takes place, where the mysteries of the photograph's context and origin reveals an interior condition—something felt rather than something seen. Veronika Pausova equally plays with absence. Her paintings come together through repetition and a build-up of surface constructed from negative spaces. What is not seen makes that

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which is. Moments of clarity and realism give way to ambiguous open fields, washes of color, or obscured patterns. The tension between the understood and the unknowable makes the mind jump from form to cause.

Peripheral vision is notably stronger than our direct lines of sight. An object of our desire, just out of reach, is often more present to us, than what we already have. The clarity that enchantment provides, through the devotion it evokes within us towards that which we cannot see, becomes a powerful tool across all three artist's practices. The contexts of our being are rarely up to our choosing, but how we allow being to be accessed can be. *Hard to Imagine* plays with these ideas of incoherence. Through a refusal to pour oneself on the page, the artists preserve a kind of internal life: a private domain where possibility runs freely through the fantasy we must only believe is there.

—Emily Small

Veronika Pausova (b. 1987, Prague, Czech Republic) lives and works in Toronto. She received her BFA from Glasgow School of Art in 2009 and her MFA from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2013. Recent solo and exhibitions include *Exoskeleton* (with Rose Nestler), Public Gallery, London, UK (2024). Recent group exhibitions include *Worlds within Worlds*, Gene's Dispensary, Los Angeles, CA (2024); *Exoskeleton*, Public Gallery, London, UK (2024); *Tools For Conviviality*, Simone Subal Gallery at Am Schwarzenbergplatz, Vienna, AT (2024); *Hat Trick*, Lin & Lin Gallery, Taipei, TW (2024). She has an upcoming solo exhibition at Bradley Ertaskiran, Montréal, CA (2026)

Marina Grize (b. 1987, Sharon, CT) is based in Philadelphia, PA. She received a BFA from SUNY Purchase, New York (2013). Grize had a recent solo exhibition, *In Between Touch*, at Adams and Ollman, Portland, OR (2025), and has an upcoming solo exhibition at Sweetwater, Berlin, Germany (2026). Recent group exhibitions include: Marina Grize Ditta, Baron Hoeber, and Olivia Jia, Margot Samel at Kendall Koppe, Glasgow, UK (2025); *The hill is getting lower. Or so it seems*, Sweetwater, Berlin, Germany (2024); XXXI, Athenaeum, San Diego, CA (2023); ICA San Diego, San Diego, CA (2023)

Peggy Chiang (b. 1989, San Francisco, CA; lives and works in Brooklyn, NY) received an MFA in Visual Arts from Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, and a BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD. She is an Assistant Professor of Art at the City College of New York CUNY. In 2024, Chiang was awarded a Joan Mitchell Fellowship. She had a recent solo exhibition *Barn burner* at Adams and Ollman, Portland, Oregon (2025). Recent group exhibitions include *Concilium*, Palazzo Grasselli, Cremona, Italy (2025) and *Domestic (1): A Shaggy Dog*, Brooklyn, New York (2025). Chiang's work is in the collection of the National Museum of Norway, Oslo, Norway.

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